



# CUSTOMARY LIFE STYLE AMONG THE PLAIN KARBIS OF KAMRUP DISTRICT OF ASSAM

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## ABSTRACT

Changes are noticed in their life and socio-cultural practices among the plain Karbi tribe. The present study focuses the habitual practices among the Plain Karbi tribe in the selected Kenduguri area of Kamrup district of Assam. The study is descriptive in nature with a sample of 62 numbers of households. Plain Karbi tribe residing in Kenduguri area is found to be progressive one with modern trend and attitude. The style of living of the plain Karbis is largely influenced due to the amalgamation of different communities and they expressed their satisfaction in residing at their localities. Either business or service is mostly preferred by them as such the timings for day to day activities also underwent transformation. Decision making rests mainly on the shoulders of the head of the family in almost all type of matters in case of rest of members of the families, except for personal matter. Modern appliances are preferred by majority of the plain Karbis along with their traditional life style. Modernization is taking place particularly with respect to the material culture.

Karbis represents one of the prominent indigenous tribes of Northeast India, with unique traditions and cultures distinct from other ethnic groups of the region. The tribes of Assam could be broadly classified under two groups: - 1) Hill tribes and 2) Plain tribes. The Karbis usually belong to hill tribe and their habitations is found in between the Brahmaputra on the north, the Dhansiri valley on the east and the Kopili and Jamuna valley on the west and the south as put forward by Lyall (1908). At present they are found both in hills and plains covering Sibsagar and Golaghat to Nagaon and Kamrup districts of Assam. Our constitution has regarded the section of the tribe inhabiting the plains as 'plain tribes' and the rest residing in the hills as 'hill tribes'.

The Karbis has been able to keep much of their traditional cultures intact generations after generation, the Karbis are found to keep alive the traditions which mark them as separate community. Due to their interactions among various social groups, the strength of traditional norms and ways of life of the tribe has changed the life style in the present day. Changes are noticed in their life and socio-cultural practices.

The present study entitled "Customary Life Style Among the Plain Karbis of Kamrup district of Assam" focuses the habitual practices among the Plain Karbi tribe in the selected Kenduguri area of Kamrup district of Assam.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To identify the day-to-day activities among the plain Karbis
2. To ascertain the consultation task carried out before taking any decision in the family of plain Karbis
3. To explore the fascination for adoption of modern things by the plain Karbis

## DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The present study is confined to three numbers of places namely Dumbari, Ghuligaon and Kenduguri located in the city of Guwahati.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The study is descriptive in nature. The population of the present study comprised of more than hundred numbers of households. In the present study 62 numbers of households as shown in table 1.

Table 1: No. of sample households

Place	No. of Households	%
DUMBARI	22	33.9
GHULIGAON	19	30.6
KENDUGURI	21	35.5
Total	62	100.0

A peculiarity exists with this place is that there are three different localities and for all these three there is only one Gaonburah. The tool comprised of an Opinion Questionnaire for the purpose of data collection.

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

**Obj. 1:** Identification of day-to-day activities among the plain Karbis

## Daily routine of the Plain Karbis:

A review of the day to day schedule of the respondent plain Karbis is illustrated in the following sub-sections.

## Wake up time:

Around 72.6 % of the respondents generally wake up in between 6.00 am-8.00 am depicted in Table 2. From the figure it is evident that the majority respondents are awake after 6 a.m. most likely due to occupational change (e.g., from agriculturist to service or business).

Table 2: Time for wake up

Wake up time	No. of Respondents	Percent
4.00- 5.00 A.M.	4	6.5
5.00-6.00 A.M.	13	20.9
6.00-7.00 A.M.	29	46.8
7.00-8.00 A.M.	16	25.8
Total	62	100.0

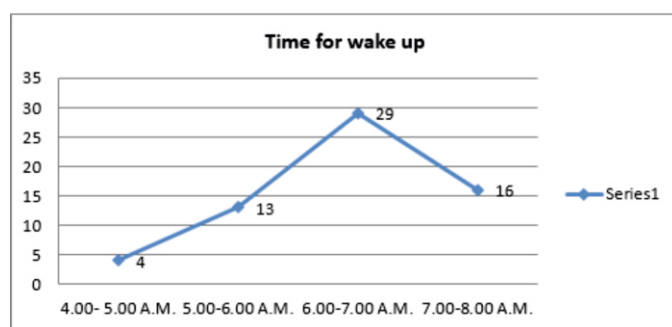


Fig. 1: Time for wake up

## Breakfast time:

Around 93.6 % of the respondents generally have their breakfast in between 6.00am-8.00am depicted in Table 3. Due to change in occupation around 82 % of the respondents are found to have their breakfast from 6.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.

Table 3: Time for Breakfast

Breakfast at	No. of Respondents	Percent
5.00- 6.00 A.M.	7	11.3
6.00- 7.00 A.M.	15	24.2
7.00- 8.00 A.M.	36	58.1
8.00- 9.00 A.M.	3	4.8
9.00-10.00 A.M.	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

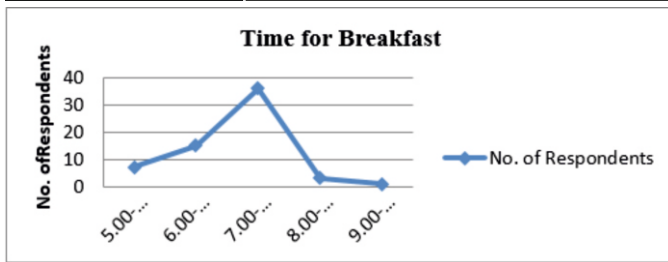


Fig. 2: Time for Breakfast

**Lunch time:**

The usual time for lunch in case of maximum (95.2 %) of the respondents is in between 12.00 noon-3.00 pm depicted in Table 4. This is to note that more than 75 % of the respondents prefer to maintain their lunch time between 12.00 noon to 2.00 p.m.

Table 4: Time for Lunch

Lunch time	No. of Respondents	Percent
11.00 A.M. - 12.00 P.M.	2	3.2
12.00- 1.00 P.M.	7	11.3
1.00- 2.00 P.M.	40	64.5
2.00- 3.00 P.M.	12	19.4
3.00- 4.00 P.M.	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

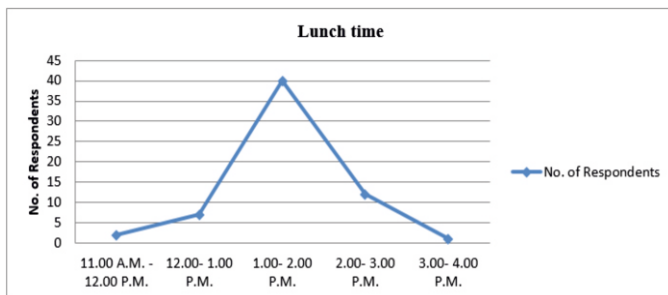


Fig. 3: Lunch time

**Tea time:**

The usual time for tea in case of maximum (63 %) of the respondents is in between 5.00 pm-8.00 pm depicted in Table 5. More than 50 % of the respondents prefer to have evening tea by 6.00p.m. to 8.00 p.m. It needs to be pointed out that a section (more than 30%) of the respondents does like to have tea again at 10.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m.

Table 5: Tea Time

Tea time	No. of Respondents	Percent
4.00 A.M. - 5.00 P.M.	1	1.6
5.00- 6.00 P.M.	4	6.5
6.00- 7.00 P.M.	21	33.9
7.00- 8.00 P.M.	14	22.6
8.00- 9.00 P.M.	1	1.6
9.00- 10.00 P.M.	2	3.2
10.00- 11.00 P.M.	19	30.6
Total	62	100.0

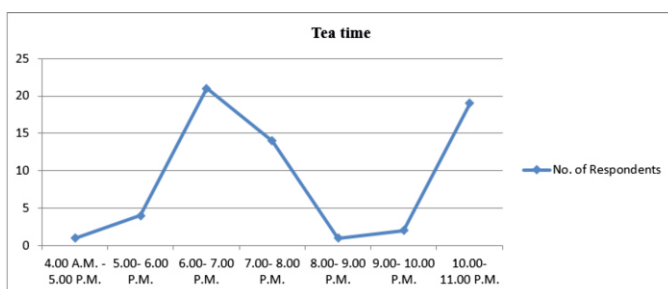


Fig. 4: Tea time

**Super time:**

The usual time for super in case of maximum (74.2 %) of the respondents is in between 9.00 pm-11.00 pm depicted in Table 6.

Table 6: Super Time

Super time	No. of Respondents	Percent
8.00 A.M. - 9.00 P.M.	2	3.2
9.00- 10.00 P.M.	16	25.8
10.00- 11.00 P.M.	30	48.4
11.00- 12.00 P.M.	14	22.6
Total	62	100.0

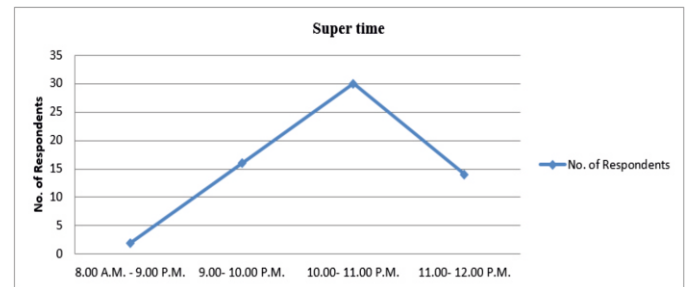


Fig. 5: Super time

**Bed time:**

Usual bed time for maximum (62.9 %) of the respondents is in between 10.00 pm-12.00 pm depicted in Table 7.

Table 7: Bed Time

Bed time	No. of Respondents	Percent
7.00- 8.00 P.M.	1	1.6
8.00-9.00 P.M.	13	20.9
9.00-10.00 P.M.	3	4.8
10.00-11.00 P.M.	16	25.8
11.00-12.00 P.M.	23	37.1
12.00-1.00 A.M.	4	6.6
1.00-2.00 A.M.	2	3.2
Total	62	100.0

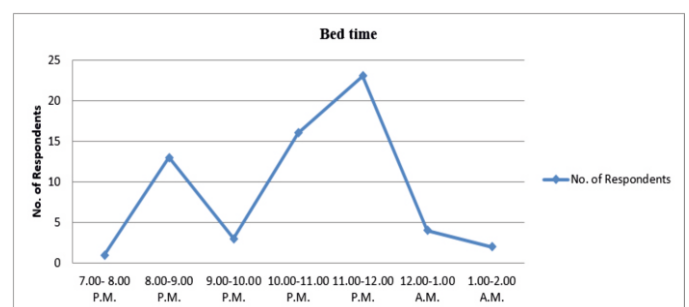


Fig. 6: Bed time

**Working hours:**

The usual time for working hour in case of maximum (70.9 %) of the respondents is in between 6-10 hours per day as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 : Working Hours

Working hours	No. of Respondents	Percent
Less than 4 hrs	5	8.1
4-6 hrs	2	3.2
6-8 hrs	10	16.2
8-10 hrs	34	54.8
10-12 hrs	8	12.9
More than 12 hrs	3	4.8
Total	62	100.00

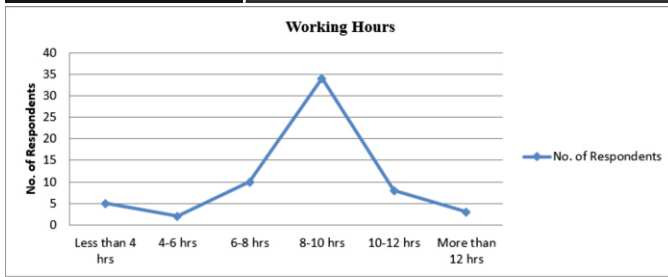


Fig. 7: Working Hours

**Obj. 2:** Consultation task carried out before taking any decision in the family of plain Karbis

Head of the Family consulted by the members of families before taking any decision in relation to following aspects

#### Family Matters:

With respect to family matters it is clear from Table 9 that almost 92 % of the family members do consult with the head of the family.

Table 9: Consultation made with regard to family matters

Consults Head	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	57	91.9
No	5	8.1
Total	62	100.0

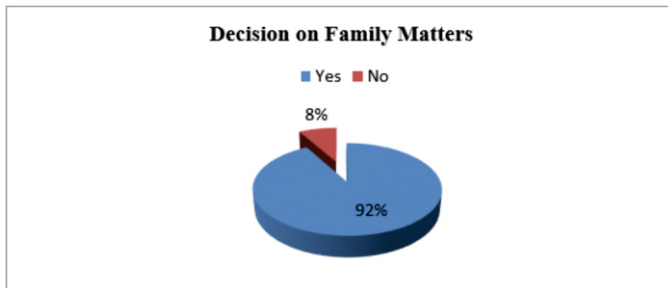


Fig. 8: Decision on Family Matters

#### Social Matter:

Even with respect to family matters it is clear from Table 10 that almost 94% of the family members do consult with the head of the family.

Table 10: Consultation made with regard to social matters

Consult Head	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	58	93.5
No	4	6.5
Total	62	100.0

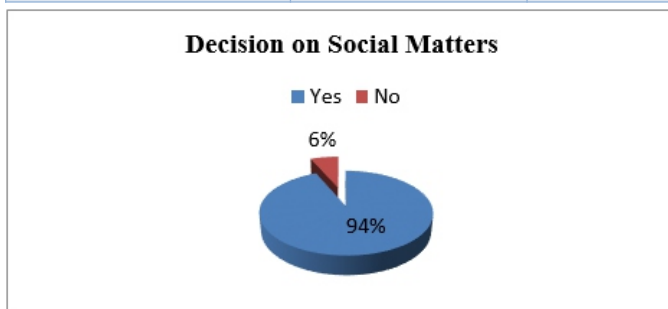


Fig. 9: Decision on Social Matters

#### Political Matter:

With respect to political matters it is clear from Table 11 that more than 80% of the family members do consult with the head of the family.

Table 11: Consultation made with regard to political matters

Consult Head	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	50	80.6
No	12	19.4
Total	62	100.0

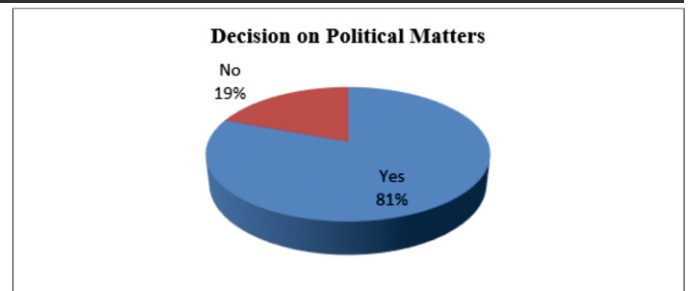


Fig. 10: Decision on Political Matters

#### Economic Matter:

With respect to economic matters it is clear from Table 12 that almost 87% of the family members do consult with the head of the family.

Table 12: Consultation made with regard to economic matters

Consult Head	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	54	87.1
No	8	12.9
Total	62	100.0

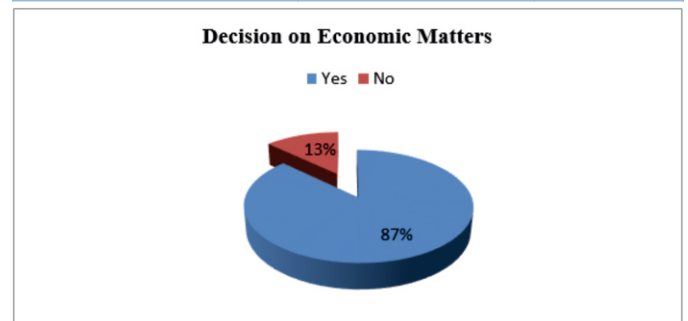


Fig. 11: Decision on Economic Matters

#### Personal Matter:

With respect to personal matters it is clear from Table 13 that only around 39% of the family members do consult with the head of the family. This is to say that 61% of the family members take decisions about personal matter on their own and hardly have they consulted the head of the family.

Table 13: Consultation made with regard to personal matters

Consult Head	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	24	38.7
No	38	61.3
Total	62	100.0

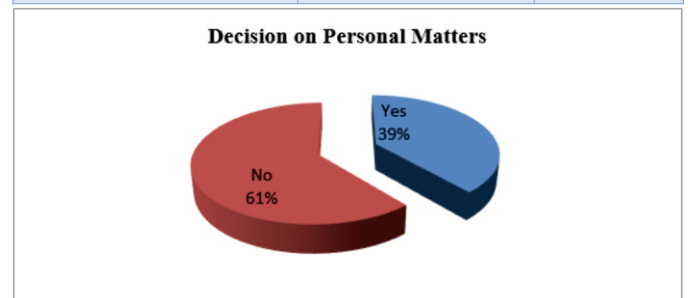


Fig. 12: Decision on Personal Matters

#### Satisfaction level derived with the location of the locality:

It is found that majority (79 %) of the respondents derives great satisfaction in residing at the existing respective localities (shown in table 14).

Table 14: Level of Satisfaction derived

Level of Satisfaction	No. of Respondents	%
To the fullest extent	3	4.8
To a great extent	46	74.2
To some extent	10	16.2
To a little extent	3	4.8
Total	62	100.00



Fig. 13: Level of satisfaction

**Facilities available in the locality:**

According to majority (more than 90 %) of the respondents it is held that during the last two decades of habitat there has been lot of changes in terms of facilities available in and around the respective locality (shown in table 15).

Table 15: Facilities available in the locality

Consult Head	No. of Respondents	%
Same as it was 20 years ago	2	3.2
Lot of changes occurred after 20 years	56	90.3
Very little changes occurred after 20 years	4	6.5
Total	62	100.0

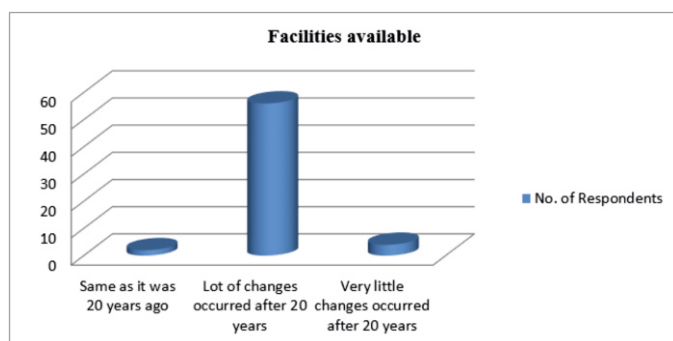


Fig. 14: Facilities available

**People in the locality do have fun socializing together:**

Majority (nearly 66 %) of the respondents opined that only on certain occasions people do have fun socializing together in the locality (shown in table 16).

Table 16: People do have fun socializing together

Frequency of having fun	No. of Respondents	%
On all occasions	21	33.9
On some occasions	41	66.1
Not at all	0	0
Total	62	100.0

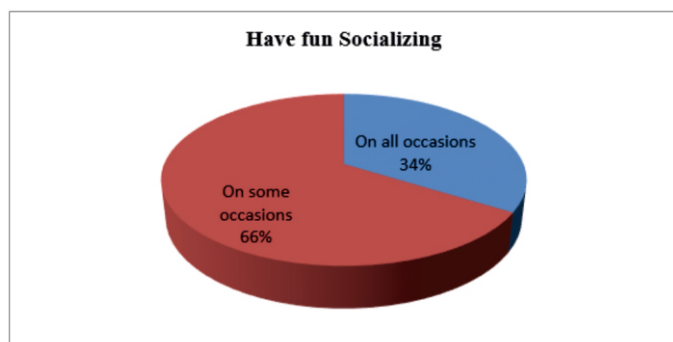


Fig. 15: Have fun Socializing

**Opinion on Local Authority's interest in the welfare of the households residing:**

Majority (around 89 %) of the respondents expressed that there is somewhat Local Authority's interest in the welfare of the households residing in the locality (shown in table 17).

Table 17: Local Authority's interest in the welfare of the households

Extent of Interest	No. of Respondents	%
Very much	7	11.3
Somewhat	55	88.7
Not at all	0	0
Total	62	100.0

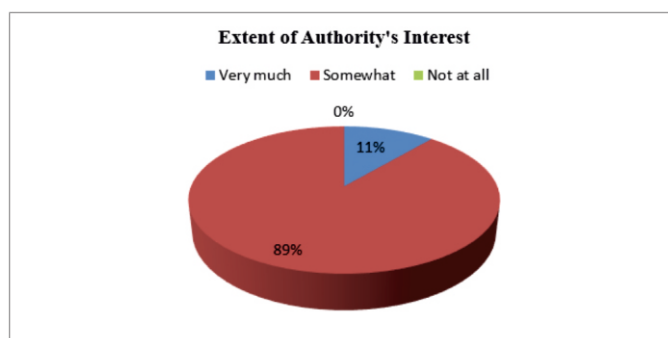


Fig. 16: Extent of Authority's Interest

**Obj. 3: Opinion on modern things****Opinion on certain specific modern electronic appliances:**

Majority of the responses obtained reveals that most of the respondents are in favour of modern appliances like Computer, Inverter, Washing Machine, Refrigerator, Kitchen Chimney, Geiger, Cooler, and Sound System shown in table 18. The appliances favoured by most of the respondents but are not present in their homes are Inverter (48.4%), Washing Machine (48.4%), Cooler (56.5). This is to note that in maximum number of houses Computer (48.4%), Kitchen Chimney (40.3 %) and Refrigerator (87.1%) exists. Appliances not favored by majority of the respondents are Geiger (58.1 %), and Sound System (74.2 %).

Table 18: Opinion on electronic appliances

Things/Opinion	Favoured does not exist at home	Favoured exists at home	Not favoured
Computer	22(35.5)	30(48.4)	10(16.1)
Inverter	30(48.4)	22(35.5)	10(16.1)
Washing Machine	30(48.4)	12(19.4)	20(32.3)
Refrigerator	5(8.1)	54(87.1)	3(4.8)
Kitchen Chimney	15(24.2)	25(40.3)	22(35.5)
Geiger	19(30.6)	7(11.3)	36(58.1)
Cooler	35(56.5)	5(8.1)	22(35.5)
Sound System DJ	16(25.8)	0	46(74.2)

N.B. Figures in parentheses are in percentage.

**Opinion on different types of Vehicles:**

Except for two wheeler and three wheeler vehicles, majority of the respondents are found to be of not in favour of truck (98.4%), bus (54.8%), car (67.7 %), taxi (96.8%), tracker (95.2 %), magic van (80.6 %) depicted in table 19. This is to be noted that majority of the respondents possess two wheeler (53.2 %) and three wheeler (45.2 %).

Table 19: Opinion on vehicles

Vehicles/Opinion	Favoured does not exist at home	Favoured exists at home	Not favoured
Truck	1(1.6)	0	61(98.4)
Bus	24(38.7)	4(6.5)	34(54.8)
Car	13(21)	7(11.3)	42(67.7)
Taxi	2(3.2)	0	60(96.8)
Tracker	3(4.8)	0	59(95.2)
Magic Van	10(16.1)	2(3.2)	50(80.6)
Three Wheeler	6(9.7)	28(45.2)	28(45.2)
Two Wheeler	8(12.9)	33(53.2)	21(33.9)

N.B. Figures in parentheses are in percentage.

**Style of dwelling house preferred:**

Regarding house, rooms, furnishings more than 60-66 % of the respondents prefer modern type of life style. More than 69-71 % respondents do prefer modern

style of sanitary, purification of water and electrification. More than 75 % of the responses prefer modern method of maintenance of house as presented in table 19. There are certain percentage of respondents still prefer to stick to traditional style of dwelling house.

**Table 20: Style of dwelling house**

Particulars/Type	Traditional	Modern	Mixture of Modern & Traditional
House	3(4.8)	37(59.7)	22(35.5)
Rooms	3(4.8)	41(66.1)	18(29)
Furnishings	3(4.8)	37(59.7)	22(35.5)
Sanitary	4(6.5)	43(69.4)	15(24.2)
Purification of Water	0	45(72.6)	17(27.4)
Lantern/Electrification	1(1.6)	44(71.0)	17(27.4)
Maintenance of house	2(3.2)	47(75.8)	13(21.0)

*N.B. Figures in parentheses are in percentage.*

#### Style of House campus preferred:

Nearly 50-52 % of the respondents prefer house with kitchen garden and house with full of fruits garden in modern and traditional style vide table 21. With respect to house with agricultural land and house with pond 47 % and 40 % of the respondents respectively prefer both modern and traditional mode of keeping house campus.

**Table 21: Style of House campus**

Particulars/Type	Traditional	Modern	Mixture of Modern & Traditional
House with kitchen garden	4(6.5)	27(43.5)	31(50.0)
House with agricultural land	9(14.5)	24(38.7)	29(46.8)
House with full of fruits garden	9(14.5)	21(33.9)	32(51.6)
House with pond	9(14.5)	28(45.2)	25(40.3)

*N.B. Figures in parentheses are in percentage.*

#### Fooding Style preferred:

Both modern and traditional type of cooking and food consumption style is preferred by 75.8 % and 56.5 % respondents respectively shown in table 22. More than half of the respondents prefer modern type of utensils.

**Table 22: Fooding style**

Particulars/Type	Traditional	Modern	Mixture of Modern & Traditional
Type of Cooking	0	14(22.6)	48(75.8)
Food	1(1.6)	3(4.8)	5(8.0)
Boil food	2(3.2)	6(9.7)	1(1.6)
Spicy food	1(1.6)	14(22.6)	29(46.8)
Boil & Spicy Mix	4(6.4)	23(37.1)	35(56.5)
Utensils	0	35(56.5)	27(43.5)

*N.B. Figures in parentheses are in percentage.*

#### Furniture, Dressing and Ornaments preferred:

More than 66% of the respondents prefer modern type of furniture for home. Around 71% and 55% of the respondents prefer mixture of modern & traditional style of dressing and ornaments respectively (table 23).

**Table 23: Furniture, Dressing and Ornaments style**

Particulars/Type	Traditional	Modern	Mixture of Modern & Traditional
Furniture	2(3.2)	41(66.1)	19(30.6)
Dressing Style	8(12.9)	10(16.1)	44(71.0)
Ornaments	16(25.8)	12(19.4)	34(54.8)

*N.B. Figures in parentheses are in percentage.*

#### FINDINGS:

Based on the field study following are the findings:

- Usual wake up time is in between 6.00 am-8.00 am; breakfast time is 6.00 am-8.00 am; lunch time is 12.00 noon-2.00 pm; tea time is 5.00pm-7.00pm; super time is 9.00 pm-11.00 pm; and bed time is 10.00pm-12.00pm among majority of the respondent Karbis.
- Daily working hours for 71 % of the respondents is in between 6-10.

- It is observed that 92 % of the family members do consult with the head of the family regarding family and social; 80% regarding economic and political and 39 % regarding personal matters.
- More than 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the respondent Karbis expressed great satisfaction in residing at the existing respective localities along with the facilities available therein. Also they do have fun in socialising together.
- There exists a certain range of Local Authority's interest in the welfare of the households residing in the locality.
- The appliances favoured by most of the respondents but are not present in their homes are Inverter (48.4%), Washing Machine (48.4 %), Cooler (56.5). This is to note that in maximum number of houses Computer (48.4 %), Kitchen Chimney (40.3 %) and Refrigerator (87.1%) exists. Appliances not favoured by majority of the respondents are Geiger (58.1 %), and Sound System (74.2 %).
- Majority of the respondents are not in favour of truck, bus, taxi, tracker, magic van. More than 53 % of the respondents do possess two- wheeler.
- Regarding house, rooms, furnishings more than 60-66 % of the respondents prefer modern type of life style. More than 69-71 % respondents do prefer modern style of sanitary, purification of water and electrification. More than 75 % of the responses prefer modern method of maintenance of house.
- Nearly 50-52 % of the respondents prefer house with kitchen garden and house with full of fruits garden in modern and traditional style.
- Both modern and traditional type of cooking and food consumption style is preferred by 75.8 % and 56.5 % respondents respectively. More than half of the respondents prefer modern type of utensils.
- More than 66% of the respondents prefer modern type of furniture for home. Around 71% and 55% of the respondents prefer mixture of modern & traditional style of dressing and ornaments respectively.

#### CONCLUSION:

Plain Karbi tribe residing in Kenduguri area is found to be progressive one with modern trend and attitude. The style of living of the plain Karbis is largely influenced due to the amalgamation of different communities and they expressed their satisfaction in residing at their localities. Either business or service is mostly preferred by them as such the timings for day to day activities also underwent transformation. Decision making rests mainly on the shoulders of the head of the family in almost all type of matters in case of rest of members of the families, except for personal matter. Modern appliances are preferred by majority of the plain Karbis along with their traditional life style. Modernization is taking place particularly with respect to the material culture.

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